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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 001169

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND PRM
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TAGS: PREL PREF SMIG RW CG

SUBJECT: CONGO'S VICE PRESIDENT RUBERWA VISITS RWANDA TO
URGE BANYAMULENGE'S RETURN

REF: KIGALI 00730

Classified By: ERIC WONG, POLITICAL OFFICER. REASON: 1.4 (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Following meetings in Kigali with President Kagame and other GOR principals, DRC Vice President Roberwa met with Banyamulenge refugees in Cyangugu and urged them to return to eastern Congo. Banyamulenge are concerned about their personal safety and economic security, including lost government jobs. Roberwa's unanticipated visit came one day after a Banyamulenge leader was to have met senior GOR officials. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/NF) On August 10 and 11, DRC Vice President Azarias Roberwa led a ministerial delegation to Kigali to discuss the situation of approximately 3,500 Banyamulenge refugees who have fled eastern DRC for Rwanda since May (reftel). The GDRC delegation--comprised of the Minister of Social Affairs and three vice ministers (including interior and security)--met with senior GOR officials, including President Paul Kagame, Foreign Minister Charles Murigande, and Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Amb. Richard Sezibera.

¶3. (S/NF) Roberwa and the GDRC delegation met with the Banyamulenge refugees at Cyangugu on August 11, addressing the refugees as a group, and then meeting selected refugee leaders. Roberwa urged the refugees to return to the DRC, assuring them it would be safe to do so. Some refugees responded to Roberwa's comments, most indicating that they believed it was still too dangerous to return to their homes in the DRC. A major concern of the refugees was that those who had been government employees learned that they had been replaced and had lost their jobs.

¶4. (U) State-run Radio Rwanda reported Roberwa's meeting with Banyamulenge refugees who cited incidents of harassment and who called for Gen. Mbusa Mabe's removal. MONUC's Radio Okapi also reported on Roberwa's visit.

¶5. (S/NF) Roberwa and the DROC delegation proposed the following course of action to the refugees:

-- the GDRC would assure their security by deploying troops to their home regions;

-- those refugees who had been employed by the GDRC would return home first, and would be entitled to return to their positions in the government;

-- the government would arrange for those who return home first to communicate with their families still in Rwanda and arrange for their eventual return.

Roberwa assured the refugees that they would not be forced to return to the DRC until they felt secure.

¶6. (S/NF) Roberwa's visit to Rwanda was hastily arranged. He arrived in Bukavu on August 7 and proposed the visit on August 9. GOR officials were unhappy about the lack of prior notice, but believed they could not reject his proposal.

BANYAMULENGE LEADER NOTES GDRC HARASSMENT

¶7. (C) Roberwa visited Kigali the day after a Banyamulenge community leader, Etienne Rusimara, was to have met Amb. Sezibera and Dr. Emmanuel Ndahiro, Kagame's former national security advisor who now serves as Director of External Intelligence. In an August 9 meeting with Poloff, Rusimira discussed the GDRC's victimization of Banyamulenge (septel), citing intimidation and harassment--including "hate radio" broadcasts by "Radio Patriot"; special government checkpoints at Uvira and Bukavu for Banyamulenge; and incidents of military forces, not civilians, targeting Banyamulenge. Rusimira said that Banyamulenge refugees who had fled to Rwanda needed not only military but also social protections, citing concerns about jobs. While outlining the plight of the Banyamulenge, Rusimira nevertheless criticized the GOR for using attacks on Banyamulenge to justify possible military intervention, saying such statements endangered Banyamulenge in the DRC by playing into fears that they were

pawns of Rwanda. (NOTE: Ruberwa and Rusamira both made their comments before the August 13 attack on Gatumba refugee camp in Burundi that claimed the lives of 170 Banyamulenge; in a August 14 communique (septel), the GOR attributes the attack to ex-FAR/Interahamwe collaborating with Mai-Mai and FNL rebels. END NOTE.)

18. (C) COMMENT: While rhetoric describing a "massacre" or "genocide" of Banyamulenge in eastern DRC is likely inflammatory, the refugees' comments to Ruberwa--coupled with Rusimara's observations--highlight that acts of violence and intimidation have led Banyamulenge refugees to flee to Rwanda. Rwandaphone Congolese---whether Banyamulenge from South Kivu, or Banyarwanda from North Kivu--have struggled for decades for Congolese citizenship and recognition. They are likely to remain in Rwanda until their genuine concerns about personal safety and economic security are addressed.
END COMMENT.

19. (U) Bujumbura minimize considered.
PATRICK